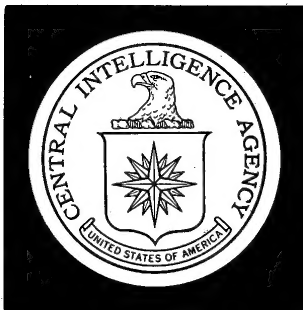




The President's Daily Brief

3 May 1971

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

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[redacted] Cambodia [redacted]
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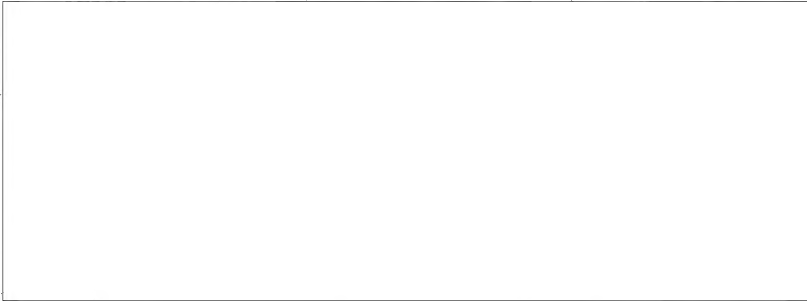
Politburo standing committee members Chen Po-ta and Kang Sheng were notable absentees at the large May Day turnout in Peking. (Page 2)

Egyptian President Sadat has dismissed Vice President Ali Sabri. (Page 3)

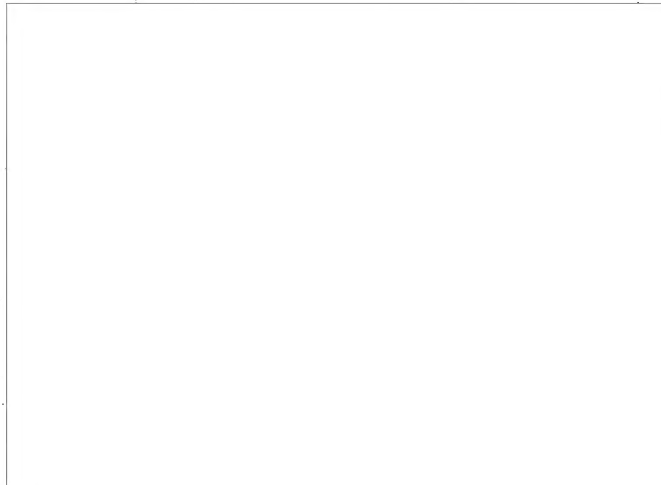
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COMMUNIST CHINA

Politburo standing committee members Chen Po-ta and Kang Sheng were the most notable absentees at the large May Day turnout in Peking. Chen, Mao Tse-tung's long-time personal secretary, and Kang, the regime's top security specialist, played leading roles in Mao's sweeping purges of the old Communist Party apparatus.

Peking tried lamely to explain away the absences by announcing that some leaders were unable to be present because of "work or sickness," a device the Chinese have never resorted to in the past to account for the absence of important leaders. Although it is possible that Chen and Kang are actually sick, there are no convincing reports that this is the case. As we noted in The President's Daily Brief of 19 March, both men have been out of sight for some time, and there have been persistent rumors in Peking that they were severely criticized at a major party gathering last fall. Their failure to participate in the May Day activities is further evidence that they have suffered a political setback.

The third major politburo figure who failed to appear was Hsieh Fu-chih, who came under fire from leftist elements in Peking last year. Although Hsieh was chosen head of the Peking municipal party committee on 19 March, he did not deliver the customary address at the municipal congress and may not have even been present at the meeting. Thus, although it would appear that Hsieh has undergone a political resurrection of sorts, his continued absence from public view suggests that his political status has not yet been totally resolved.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

EGYPT

President Sadat issued a decree yesterday removing Vice President Sabri from his post. There is no information as to whether Sabri retains his position as a member of the higher executive committee of the Arab Socialist Union (ASU), Egypt's nominal political party.

Sabri's dismissal appears to have been prompted by a direct challenge to President Sadat's authority on the conditions for Egypt's entry into the Federation of Arab Republics. Sadat and Sabri clashed over the issue a week ago at a meeting of the central committee of the ASU. This forced Sadat to secure approval from the other two members of the federation, Libya and Syria, for modifications in arrangements for the new political entity. Sabri's pointed criticism of Sadat's handling of the federation question was but the latest of his maneuvers to achieve a greater voice in policymaking. He has also exploited his position as a one-time Nasir favorite to undercut Sadat's commitment to seeking a negotiated settlement with the Israelis.

Sadat's decisive move against his most prominent critic reinforces our impression that he is increasingly confident of his ability to manipulate the instruments of power. The public support Sadat received last week from the powerful minister of interior, Sharawi Goma, for his role in laying the groundwork for the three-state federation may have encouraged Sadat in his move against Sabri. Even if Sabri holds on to his position in the ASU, he has almost certainly been eclipsed as an influential contributor to the formulation of policy.

In view of Sabri's prominent identification with the Soviet Union, Moscow may find his removal embarrassing, particularly since it coincides so closely with Secretary Rogers' impending visit to Cairo.

FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

NOTE

Yugoslavia: Tito claims that unanimity was achieved at last week's party presidium at his island retreat on Brioni, but the equivocal nature of some of his remarks leaves the impression that many basic issues were only papered over. The party leaders called for strict discipline to overcome regional chauvinism, and Tito, in a gesture of solidarity, sailed from Brioni with Croatian leaders whose independent views on constitutional reforms were presumably a major focus of the meeting. Nevertheless, the signs point to more friction ahead.

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